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A COMPARISON OF TWO WORKS OF CERVANTES WITH A PLAY BY MASSINGER

The purpose of this paper is to compare the *novela* "El Celoso Estremeño" and the farce "El Viejo Celoso" of Cervantes, with each other and to contrast both with "The Fatal Dowry" by Philip Massinger; and furthermore to trace the connection, if there be such, between these two works of Cervantes and that of the English writer. In order to present this material clearly it is necessary first to give a résumé of the three productions.

El Celoso Estremeño or The Jealous Extremaduran

The hero of this *novela*, or short story, by Cervantes is a certain Felipo de Carrizales, who, after having squandered all his patrimony, went to the Indies in search of a new fortune. Through long years of labor and hardship he succeeded in amassing great wealth. Although he is now rich he is old, and so decides to return to his native land. Since he has no relatives he is at liberty to live wherever his whim may suggest, and consequently takes up his abode in Seville.

He would fain take a wife but, being himself conscious of the great defect of his character—extreme jealousy—he is harrassed by the fear that marriage would forever destroy his peace of mind. He resolves not to wed. One day, however, he sees at a window a girl of fourteen years, and is suddenly so infatuated with her charms that he throws all his good resolutions to the wind and marries her. The wedding ceremony is scarcely ended when he proceeds to carry out a plan by which he thinks all occasion for jealousy may be removed. He buys an elegant house, closes up all the windows and outside doors (except one entrance door, the key to which he always keeps in his possession), and excludes every male being from it except himself and an old negro eunuch. Leonora, his wife, submits to all these arrangements, and lives tranquilly in the company of her maid servants, her slave women, and a duenna named Maria-lonso. But the old man's ridiculous precautions are all for naught for Loaisa, "un virote de la gente de barrio," is seized with the desire of gaining entrance to the jealously guarded house. Pretending to be a crippled musician, he gains by means of skill on the guitar first the admiration and then the confidence of

the eunuch who guards the only entrance door, and who, conquered by the entreaties of Loaisa, allows him to enter the house secretly. The duenna, the maid servants, and slave women are seduced by his entrancing music. The wicked duenna persuades Leonora to yield to the desires of Loaisa, but the jealous husband coming from under the influence of a magic ointment which, secretly applied by Leonora, has caused him to fall into a deep sleep, finds his young wife and Loaisa locked in each other's embrace the next morning. The shock is too severe for him to withstand. Before dying, however, he acknowledges with remorse that he was wrong to keep his wife in such seclusion, forgives her, and urges her to marry Loaisa. But Leonora prefers to take the veil.

El Viejo Celoso or the Jealous Old Man

This farce opens with a conversation between Doña Lorenza, Cristina, her servant, and Hortigosa, her neighbor, in which Lorenza reveals the fact that Cañizares, her old husband, always locks the door when he leaves the house, and does not allow her to communicate with anyone on the outside of it. On this particular day, however, he has forgotten to lock the door and for the first time since her marriage she has an opportunity to talk with her neighbor. The women devise a means by which a "galan" and a "frailecico" are to be smuggled into the house by Hortigosa for the pleasure of Doña Lorenza and Cristina.

In the second scene Cañizares tells one of his friends that he is extremely jealous of his wife, but when his friend questions him closely he confesses there are no real reasons for his suspicion. As Cañizares enters his house, after dismissing his friend, he hears Doña Lorenza talking, and at once asks her with whom she is conversing. She answers: "With Cristinica." This reply seems to satisfy the husband, but still he warns her against talking to herself, saying that that might prejudice her against him. During this conversation between husband and wife, Hortigosa reappears with a "guadamecí," which she pretends she wishes to sell to Cañizares so she can have some money to aid her son who is in trouble. While Cañizares is looking at the "guadamecí" the lover slips from behind it into the adjacent room. Cañizares refuses to purchase the article offered by Hortigosa, but gives her a coin and orders her out of the house. She obeys after she has had her say. Doña Lorenza pretends to be angry because her husband has sent her neighbor away, and sulkily locks herself in a room, which, of course, is the one into which the lover has entered. From her retreat she carries on a conversation with Cristina, who is outside of the room and in the presence of Cañizares. She tells her servant how nice the lover is, and leads Cristina to inquire whether her lover, the "frailecico," is there also. The husband's suspicions are aroused to the highest pitch and he threatens to break down the door if Doña Lorenza does not open it. To prevent such a disaster she accedes to his demands, and as Cañizares rushes into the room she dashes a basin of water in his face, thereby giving the lover an opportunity to escape without being seen while the husband is wiping his face. Doña Lorenza upbraids her husband for his jealousy in such a loud tone of voice that the "aguacil" comes in to see why she is creating so much disturbance. He is followed by Hortigosa, a musician and a dancer. Cañizares accuses Hortigosa of being the cause of all the trouble but pardons her, and after a song and dance the farce ends.

The Fatal Dowry

After the death of his Prince in the battle of Nancy in January, 1477, the Fieldmarshal of Charles the Bold of Burgundy had borrowed large sums of money in order to be able to continue the war and bring about an honorable peace. At the conclusion of this peace, as he could not satisfy his creditors the Fieldmarshal was thrown into prison, where he died. When his creditors refused to allow his body to be buried, his son Charalois in the full consciousness of filial duty resolves to sacrifice his young life to the creditors of his father, and takes the latter's place in prison. The magnanimity of Rochfort, the former magistrate of Dijon, who is filled with admiration at the son's fidelity to his father's memory, not only opens the doors of his prison and pays his debts, but also gives him his daughter's hand in marriage. This daughter, Beaumelle, the only heir of Rochfort, is a superficial girl who has been reared in luxury, and although she is in love with a young fop named Novall Junior she does not have the courage or desire to oppose her father's will in the matter of her marriage. A maid bribed by Novall influences her weak-willed mistress to Novall's favor, and the *amour* is carried on in such a notorious fashion that a friend of the young husband feels himself called upon to warn him. Charalois, however, supposes that the feeling of honor and duty is just as strong in others as in himself, and his confidence in his wife is unshaken. He sharply reproves his friend for the warning and allows Beaumelle entire freedom in the affair until he surprises her in the arms of her lover. Novall is forced to fight Charalois and is killed. But Charalois will not himself pass judgment upon his guilty wife; her father, his benefactor, shall be her judge. In a thrilling scene the old father pronounces the sentence of death upon Beaumelle, and Charalois carries out the sentence at once. Accused of the murder of Novall and Beaumelle by the fathers of the two victims, Charalois succeeds, nevertheless, in convincing the judge of the justice of his actions and is acquitted only to be stabbed to death by a client of Novall's house.

In "El Celoso Estremeño" and in "El Viejo Celoso" we have a striking illustration of the author's fondness for using the same material for different purposes. A Giannini says¹: "The *novela* is serious, grave, sad, and the development is long enough to allow a preparation of action, an extensive study of the manifold characters, a richness and variety of scenes or situations which can not have place in the farce. And greatly different is the design, the intention, the coloring of them. In the farce the characters are burlesque, satirical, as they should be to divert and amuse the spectators, not to entice them to serious and painful considerations. Hence, a wave of 'comicitá' pours out upon the old married man delineated jocosely and modeled upon the type of the traditionally jealous old man who is ridiculed and gulled in novel, comedy, and narrative poetry. The Carrizales of the *novela* is not joked—not even really

¹ *Novelle di M. Cervantes*, pp. 145-149.

betrayed—because Leonora, although compromised forever, is not possessed by Loaysa; the Cañizares of the farce is agreeably deceived and betrayed to the end.”

At first sight one is inclined to think that there is no connection whatever between “The Fatal Dowry” and either the *novela* or the farce. Certainly in the English play there is not much to remind us of either of the Spanish compositions until the discovery of the wife’s infidelity by her husband in Act IV, scene 2. It is evident from what has been said in the above résumé of the plots that the situation in “The Fatal Dowry” arises not from jealousy on the part of the husband and the seclusion of the wife, but from the infidelity of the wife who has had entire liberty. Only when we make a careful study of the three productions can we see a possible influence of Cervantes upon the English play, and even then we find this influence more often to result in contrast than in likeness.

In the *novela* the husband believes that the wife is guilty when in reality she is compromised but innocent; in the farce the husband believes the wife innocent when she is guilty. In Cervantes’s productions the husbands suffer a misapprehension, while in the English play the husband has the correct understanding of the situation. In the farce and in the play the husband’s suspicions are aroused by hearing the wife’s voice in an adjacent room. In both cases the husband rushes into the room; but in the farce he is blinded by the water which is thrown in his face, and discovers no lover, whereas in the play he finds the lover and the wife. In the *novela* and in the play the husband actually sees the wife with the lover. In all three of the productions the evil intentions of the lovers are obvious, and furthermore in all three of them there is a woman who acts as intermediary. In the *novela* it is due to the duenna, who, wicked at heart, uses her persuasive powers to the utmost to induce the pure, innocent young wife to commit the sin, that Leonora finally yields to the lover’s wishes. The duenna herself as a reward for this expects to enjoy the same forbidden fruit with Loaisa. In the farce we find two women playing the rôle of intermediary—the servant, who expects the same reward as the duenna in the *novela*, and the neighbor woman, who sees an opportunity to gain a little money. These two female characters find the wife willing and anxious to take their advice, a fact which is not found in the *novela*. In the play the servant of Beaumelle, the wife, is not very prominent, and is satisfied with money as a reward. She does not have occasion to

influence her mistress to any great extent, for Beaumelle, like Doña Lorenza, is already only too willing to gratify the desires of the lover. In all three of the compositions the wife has dutifully married the man that her parents have selected for her. In the *novela* she is contented and apparently happy with her lot, but in the farce she is not only discontented but even rebellious, while in the play she is neither particularly unhappy nor discontented.

The parents of the wife appear in the *novela* and are necessary to the development of the plot and the denouement. They regret that their daughter is shut up by her husband, but they do not seriously oppose the arrangement. They are called in at the end to hear the husband's charge against his wife. In the farce the parents of the wife are mentioned indirectly, but they never appear on the scene, while in the play Beaumelle's father plays a very important rôle.

Carrizales, as has been said, is a rich, jealous old man who allows his wife no communication with the outside world. Upon discovering his wife in a compromising attitude with Loaisa he is filled at first with a desire to have recourse to the unwritten law, but he is so completely shocked at his discovery that he swoons. When he regains consciousness he summons his wife's parents and brings a formal charge against her, and, without allowing her to present any defense, pronounces sentence upon her. But what a generous sentence! While still convinced of her infidelity to him, he bestows upon her an immense fortune, requests her to marry her paramour, and, confessing his own mistake in trying to shield her too closely, dies. Cañizares is also rich, old and jealous. Like Carrizales, he lets no male being cross his threshold. He says he has no reason for being jealous, but that he keeps his wife locked in the house to prevent her coming in contact with any malicious neighbor woman. When Hortigosa comes into the house to sell him a "guadamecí" he is so incensed at her that he does not see the lover who slips into the adjoining room. Being duped by his wife into believing that his blind jealousy has led him to think she is not faithful to him, he forgives the neighbor woman whom he considered responsible for the misunderstanding.

In the matter of dealing with the husbands we find that the English play is in direct contrast to both the *novela* and the farce.

Charalois is a young man—in marked contrast with the other two husbands—and he is poor, so poor that he is imprisoned for

debts incurred by his father. His benefactor not only frees him from prison, but gives him his daughter and a fortune. He has had such high ideals of honor instilled in his mind that he believes all the world is honorable and upright, consequently he has entire confidence in his young wife's fidelity, even when warned that she is involved with Novall. When he discovers absolute proof of her infidelity his insistence upon the point of honor would do credit to the most inexorable Spaniard. He calls Novall to task and kills him in a duel. Then he accuses Beaumelle before her father, receives his decree of punishment, and carries out the sentence of death upon the guilty wife.

In the *novela* the wife is young—fourteen years of age—poor and unsophisticated, and when her jealous old husband shuts her off from the world she yields without any complaint. Since she has been reared in simple fashion and knows nothing of extravagance, her wants are few, and she is content to live as her husband directs because she thinks that is the proper thing to do. When the seducer finally gains access to the house and makes his unseemly proposals to her through the duenna, she is with difficulty persuaded to yield to the glowing entreaties of the wicked woman, and reluctantly enters the room with Loaisa, where, we are told, both her strength and that of the lover is so consumed in her resisting his advances that from sheer exhaustion they fall asleep in each other's embrace, in which compromising attitude they are discovered the next morning by the wronged husband. Accused by her husband in the presence of her parents and the duenna, she is too overcome by the blow to assert her innocence, and upon her husband's dying of remorse over belief in her guilt she retires to a convent, in spite of the request of her husband that she marry Loaisa.

Doña Lorenza says that she did not *take* her old husband, but that he had been *given* to her, and that were she free again she would bite off her tongue rather than say "yes". She is not slow to condemn her husband to the neighbor woman the very first time that she converses with her, and she is ready to accept the attentions of any "galan" who may be smuggled over the threshold for her. In a fit of rage at Cañizares she finds an excuse for locking herself in the room with the lover, and drives her husband almost frantic with jealousy by the rapid-fire conversation that she carries on with Cristina while she (Lorenza) is enjoying sin with the "galan." Her lustful nature being satisfied, she furnishes her paramour a

means of escape when she temporarily blinds her husband by dashing a bañin of water in his face. She then rails at Cañizares for his insane jealousy in such terms that an officer of the law comes in to restore peace. As a climax she compels Cañizares to pardon Hortigosa for her part in the episode, and says she kisses the hands of all neighbor women.

Beaumelle is neither very young nor unsophisticated. She obeys her father's request to marry Charalois because she is too helpless to struggle against parental authority, although she is in love with Novall. Given entire liberty of conduct by her husband, she makes unrestrained use of this liberty with her lover. When in the presence of her father she is accused by Charalois of immoral relations with Novall, she confesses her indiscretions and welcomes death as a just punishment.

Leonora, young, guileless, and strongly influenced by the duenna, submits, but, before actually committing the sin of infidelity to Carrizales, is brought to a realization of the act and successfully resists the advances of Loaisa. Thus while she is compromised and believed by her husband to be guilty she is in reality innocent. She is too crushed, however, by the accusation of Carrizales to offer any defense and allows him to die without undeceiving him. Beaumelle, weak-willed, gives herself up wholly to Novall, and receives her punishment without offering any resistance. Thus we see the treatment of the wife in the English play is the direct opposite to that in the *novela*, except that neither Beaumelle nor Leonora presents any plea for clemency.

The three paramours have at least one common characteristic—they are evil-minded. In the beginning, it is true, Loaisa is only curious to know what is hidden in the house of the rich Carrizales that entrance to it should be so difficult or impossible. Upon seeing Leonora, however, he is so inflamed with lustful passion that he leaves nothing undone to gratify his desires, and Leonora owed nothing to any good intentions on his part. The "galan" in the farce is willing to play the rôle, not through any particular passion for Lorenza, but merely because she is a woman. He sneaks into the house fully hidden behind the "guadamecí" and sneaks out again without any danger to himself and without contributing a single word to the conversation. Novall is clearly a libertine, whose only thought is to satisfy his lasciviousness with Beaumelle. He insults the friend, Romant, when the latter pleads with him not to take

advantage of Beaumelle's love for him, and when surprised in his sin with her he is too cowardly to fight until forced into the duel.

What are the indications that Massinger was conversant with the subject-matter in the *novela* and the farce of Cervantes? Aside from the possibility that when it comes to dealing with the punishment of Beaumelle Massinger had in mind the Spanish point of honor which required the wronged husband to punish the erring wife, the internal evidence is slight. The striking contrast between the portrayal of the husbands by the two writers may indicate a difference in national point of view, but to say so would probably strain the point of a matter that may be due only to accident. As far as time is concerned, it was possible for Massinger to know the Spanish productions. If he had knowledge of them it must have reached him through some other language than English, for the "Novelas Ejemplares" of Cervantes, although printed in Spanish in 1613, and translated into French in 1614, were not published in English until the edition of Diego Pudeser (James Mabbe) appeared in 1640. As "The Fatal Dowry" was written in 1619, and published in 1622, the possibility exists that Massinger knew the works of Cervantes discussed above, but that he was influenced by either of them in his own production is not sustained by the evidence.

JOHN THOMAS LISTER

COLLEGE OF WOOSTER,
WOOSTER, OHIO